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Tom DeHart: Aspiring & Promising Principals **Joe Freed:** Professional Development; Teachers and Principals **Laura Motel:** Communications
Liz Neal: Institutes of Higher Education **Frank Stetson:** Professional Development; Teachers and Principals **Teri Windley:** Administrative Assistance

Special Edition: Reflections On Teacher and Principal Evaluation

During the last three years, 32 Communication Bulletins have been published in an attempt to provide timely information about the progress of Teacher and Principal Evaluation. These Bulletins have served as a vehicle for disseminating factual and unbiased information to inform our thinking and to educate a greater audience of interested and invested educators. Transparent in content, the Bulletins have avoided the temptation to opine or sway reader positions. Information was transmitted and questions were posed in response to data, evidence, and observations, as a means to stimulating investigation, encouraging dialogue, and determining direction.

As Race to the Top expires, I have invited members of the Office of Teacher and Principal Evaluation who have led this work to weigh-in with their personal perspectives in this Special Reflective Edition. The views expressed herein are those of the writers and not necessarily MSDE. We hope you will find this of interest.

The integration of Teacher and Principal Evaluation with MSDE organizational and technology structures

Reflection on Teacher and Principal Evaluation

Reflection offers the opportunity to both consider progress made and to recognize the contributions of those who made the progress possible. Since originally posing four questions, we have confirmed that we can indeed measure student growth, that we can attribute student growth to the work of teachers and principals, and that we can make evaluation fair for all educators. We have listened and responded to our Local Education Agencies (LEAs) as we developed a means to translate student assessment measures to evaluation (Maryland Tiered Assessment Index), as we explored and embraced alternative growth measures (Student Learning Objectives), and as we reached consensus for State Teacher and Principal Evaluation Model Frameworks. We have met and exceeded the educator effectiveness expectations within Race to the Top; not only achieving approved evaluation models and collecting statewide teacher and principal effectiveness ratings, but also modeling a developmental pipeline for principals, conducting research around evaluation, and elevating the conversation from simple evaluation to the complexities of the continuous improvement of students, teachers, principals, schools, and educator preparation programs. While our thinking around these complexities has matured, we have remained true to the belief that the purpose of evaluation is to improve the instructional craft of teachers and the leadership skills of principals.

From the outset we accepted that this would be a six-year process and with three years accomplished, we can now focus on the fourth and most important original question – will it elevate the achievement of our students? What began as a federally-based exercise in compliance and accountability has evolved into an evaluation mindset that identifies and directs professional development. The reoccurring data that becomes available will position Maryland to objectively answer many of the fundamental questions about educator effectiveness and test scores, shared measures, and the contribution of evaluation component measures. Dynamic and mutually beneficial partnerships with our LEAs, teachers unions, and principal associations have fostered respect and purpose with our education stakeholders. It is these relationships which hold the greatest promise for sustaining this work into the future and our stakeholders have openly expressed both their endorsement and enthusiasm for continuing forward, regardless of the national landscape. This commitment speaks volumes about the quality of the collaboration and the sincerity of the purpose of our partners.

Programmatically there is much of which to be proud. The formalizing of an Office of Teacher and Principal Evaluation, the creation of a Principal Pipeline, the Promising Principals Academy, and the groundbreaking work around Student Learning Objectives are just a few.

Delivering Services To Maryland's Principal Pipeline



From a professional perspective, the Office of Teacher and Principal Evaluation is grateful to the many external agencies, associations, and foundations that have supported us during Race to the Top. We are thankful for internal support from the MSDE Offices of Technology, Policy, Budget, and Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment; who kept us informed, on track with timelines, and aligned in our thinking.

We are proud of the “living” Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was signed with our state partners. Most significantly, we are proud to have taken Maryland from “sanction” to “exemplar” in the national dialogue on teacher and principal evaluation in three short years.

On a more personal level, there are several individuals I must recognize. To our critical friend and state team leader Tim Dove (CCSSO), thank you for your commitment to support Maryland’s interests these last three years. Your council, enthusiasm, and willingness to pitch-in and help do the work is truly appreciated. I am not sure that Maryland would be where we are without your advocacy. To Bill Slotnik (CTAC), our resident expert on SLOs, thanks for partnering with us in this groundbreaking work and for being a trusted colleague. Your attention to our interests and the needs of our educators has been remarkable. We are similarly grateful to the MACC@WestEd for serving as an authentic critical friend and impartial evaluator of our work. We are grateful to our local superintendents who have welcomed us into their LEAs and given us access to their instructional, leadership, and operational personnel. You have maintained an open mind and exhibited a readiness to reach consensus on difficult issues; often foregoing local autonomy for the good of the group. To Betty Weller and Cheryl Bost (MSEA) who have embraced this work and helped craft a model example of how a state and its teachers can work productively towards a common goal. The trust and professional collegiality you extended have sustained us throughout this process and serve as tangible reminders to those who incorrectly believe that organizational roles require adversarial postures. To Scott Pfeiffer (MASSP) and Debbie Drown (MAESP), who have provided access to principals and assistant principals across the state and have invited Maryland to share in the work with their organizations. We all agree that Principals are the key players.

To Ilene Swirnow, Ben Feldman, Laura Motel, Joe Freed, Tom DeHart, Liz Neal, Frank Stetson, and Teri Windley, the remarkable TPE team that has accomplished so much in so little time, your willingness to always take on more and to do so with joy and enthusiasm cannot be overstated. Whatever Maryland has accomplished in the realm of TPE is directly attributable to the dedication and commitment you have shown for the students and educators in our state. Your incredible work ethic and unwavering professionalism are directly responsible for whatever notoriety Maryland has enjoyed and I am personally forever in your debt for the years you have given. Most notably, I am proud of the courage you exhibited in allowing an independent external evaluator to measure the credibility of your work. While many would be intimidated, your comfort merely confirms the confidence you have in your experience and ability and reinforces the faith that you place in transparency and trust.

Most importantly, we must thank Dr. Lowery for her commitment to this work and her never-ending advocacy. As a champion and confidant, her passion and perspective have kept us grounded in the work and continuously on course. Her support has gained us access to national expertise and allowed us to contribute to the dialogue that is shifting the evaluation paradigm in America. Without your leadership, none of this would have been possible.

After four years, I still believe that we can develop an evaluation methodology that encompasses a fair balance of accountability measures with developmental outcomes. I believe, that over the next few years, we will use data and practice to determine that balance. And I believe that an evaluation resulting in professional development targeted to the needs of educators and aligned to the accountability expectations for students should remain the priority and will ultimately triumph as the best approach to incorporating continuous improvement as the dominant operational culture.

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United States Department of Education National Governors Association Council of Chief State School Officers Southern Regional Education Board Mid Atlantic Assessment Consortium@ WestEd Community Training and Assistance Center University Council of Educational Administration The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation The Wallace Foundation Maryland Institutes of Higher Education The Reform Support Network

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Maryland State Department of Education Maryland Association of Boards of Education Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland Maryland State Education Association Baltimore Teachers Union Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals

As this phase of our work comes to a close, we embark on the next chapter that will determine the degree to which evaluation can positively change teacher, principal and student performance over time. We will attempt to prove what components of evaluation have the greatest potential to contribute to that priority and discard those which lack value. We will determine those evaluation components that define highly effective teachers and principals and inform the improvement of educator preparation programs and LEA professional development. The Office of Teacher and Principal Evaluation looks forward to this challenge.

Dave Volrath

For the past four years Mr. Volrath has served as Planning and Development Officer for the TPE Project

Reflection on Communications

Over the course of the 2014-15 school year, the MSDE Office of Teacher and Principal Evaluation sought to create and implement a strategic, ongoing, and cohesive approach to communicating with our partners in Maryland's 24 local schools systems, as well as the State's teacher and principal organizations and others critical to this work. Meetings and targeted training revolved around three "Spheres of Influence" – the construction of rigorous and high-quality SLOs, communications, and sustaining TPE beyond RTTT.

Throughout the year, as the OTPE team delivered these trainings and convenings, it became clear that there were two components critical to ensuring that this work was successfully delivered to not only the meeting attendees, but also brought back and implemented in Maryland's LEAs and schools – 1) getting the right people around the table, and 2) ensuring consistency in messaging.

To help ensure that the right people were around the table and receiving this important information, the OTPE asked each LEA to bring a variety of district and school-level staff to each "Sphere" convening. This would help get information back to individuals at all levels of the school system – from the district office to the schools themselves – and provide a variety of voices to share those messages and train their staff and peers.

To help ensure that messages were communicated in a consistent manner, employing a common language and understanding, the OTPE staff utilized the same content presenters to train different groups of LEA staff. After working with these presenters numerous times, OTPE staff became experts in this content as well and made themselves available to school and district staff for individualized trainings.

To further strengthen communication efforts across the State and within each LEA, the OTPE devoted an entire training "Sphere" to communications, covering both external communications – working with the media, community engagement, social media management – and internal communications – communicating with district and school staff, providing consistent messaging, making sure information reach from the district level and into schools. Getting the right people around the table to hear important TPE messages as well as ensuring that our LEA partners had the understanding and tools to provide effective communications to their staff and peers has been critical to the ongoing successful implementation of TPE in Maryland.

As we look to a new year, the OTPE staff will build upon the strengths learned over the past year to help facilitate the successful work of LEAs in all areas of Teacher and Principal Evaluation. This year's strategic plan for delivering TPE information and services to our district partners again falls into three "Spheres" of training. However, the OTPE has decided to hold smaller regional and role-specific meetings to help ensure that more people are able to attend, as the distances traveled will not be as great, and hope the smaller numbers of attendees at each meeting will help facilitate more in depth conversations that speak directly to local and/or role-specific needs. We have also asked the LEAs to provide updated and differentiated contact lists, so that the right people are being invited to the appropriate meetings and trainings.

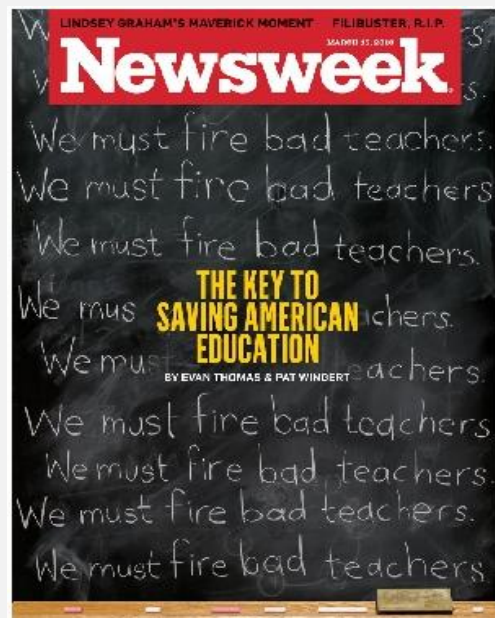
To help ensure the continued consistency in messaging, the OTPE will again work with CTAC to provide training on SLOs, building upon the work they did with the State and LEA teams last year. Greater and easier access to TPE-related information and resources will also be made available through MSDE's newly redesigned website, which is currently under construction. The website redesign will allow the OTPE to completely revamp its online offerings, making important information and tools easier to find and updated on a more regular and ongoing basis.

Laura Motel

For the past four years Ms. Motel has served as Communications Specialist on matters of TPE

Reflections on the Technical Aspects of Teacher and Principal Evaluation: Five Years' Worth of Progress

In spring 2010, just as the Maryland Education Reform Act and the successful Race to the Top (RTTT) application were moving forward, interested students of education could gauge the national mood informing the hottest reform agenda. RTTT required four guiding principles, and “recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals” was the third such on that list. But as the stark [Newsweek](#) cover of that March 5th proclaimed, the above principle was not necessarily to be construed as an entirely benign exercise aimed at improving the cadre of America’s education work-force. An “effective teacher” was now posited as the lever variable that state and local school systems could manipulate to remedy perennial problems in the nation’s schools, especially in low-performing schools—those needing turn-around (the fourth of the RTTT guiding principles)—and an emergent consensus pointed to the removal of ineffective teachers as the appropriate urgent action. Like the paradigm of a popular TV show, we could fire our way to excellence. Thus while the language of RTTT spoke of *effectiveness*, a compelling interest was the identification of *ineffectiveness* and mustering the means and will to enforce personnel actions to expel those who evidenced ineffectiveness from the profession.



The literature was rife with suggestions such as [this](#) and [this](#) and [this](#): that one year with an ineffective teacher greatly harmed the student, two sequential years could leave a deficit nearly impossible to repair, and the costs to the individual and to society are enormous. At the supposed cutting edge of evaluative efforts would be states like Tennessee or North Carolina which piloted the SAS EVAAS®, Education Value-Added Assessment System. Such models use as many prior test scores as possible to fit a prediction line for each student. If the student’s next test score falls on or above the predicted trajectory, the teacher’s contribution is deemed effective or exemplary. Further, these models parse out many covariates such school or community inputs. They control for the persistence or decay of teacher effects. The results of these systems are sophisticated, account for about five percent of observed variance in scores, and are more or less impossible to communicate to most audiences. In a sense, it is an expensive and volatile argument over a nickel. Also worrisome, the very precise attention to controlling for demographics tacitly implies that it is acceptable for minorities or children in poverty to be judged on lower success trajectories. As long as the student meets expectations, even low expectations which cannot possibly equate to college and career readiness, the results confirm effectiveness.

In Maryland’s RTTT application, Teacher and Principal Evaluation (TPE) efforts were scattered across multiple projects. One project, dead in the water from inception, proposed retroactively fitting a vertical scale to the aging Maryland School Assessments (MSAs), tests designed as criterion-referenced and with considerable discontinuities in the scale score distributions. A second project planned to devise a psychometric model to measure student growth, a concept that had been explicitly worked into the Reform Act and RTTT. The Tennessee model, described briefly in the preceding paragraph, was what Maryland promised USDE to explore. A third project was named Educator Effectiveness, but this was envisioned as a procurement. The work of calculating a fair and objective rating score would surely be beyond the technical abilities of most LEAs, especially if a fully fledged value-added system was adopted. So if functional and business requirements were written with sufficient precision, certainly the right vendor would offer a canned solution: LEA measures in; consistent and vetted ratings out. Another project promised to enhance the training of instructional leaders, but the content of this training was not fully visualized.

When MSDE started to map out the work, the proposed evaluation scheme called for a 50-50 split between professional practice and student growth. The practice part did not seem to be overly controversial, as LEAs already used the observe-and-evaluate methodology, even though the inconsistencies and subjectivity of using principal or executive officer judgment alone was a common experience for many educators. Student growth as a measure of teacher performance was more or less terra incognita. MSA data had been used to zero-base programs, and HSA data had been used as a graduation requirement, albeit with many escape hatches. But student data had never been rolled into the smaller bundle that could be mapped and attributed to the teacher

who had delivered the direct instruction.

Early models were overly confident. The State would put 30 percentage points of the student growth measures on the table, and the LEAs would make up the other 20 percentage points. It quickly became apparent that even if the State possessed a perfect test with repeated measures (which Maryland did not), the State could only offer a growth score for students in grades 4 to 8. The HSAs are not a repeated measure. Some LEAs had a rich bank of local high-stakes benchmarks – perhaps these LEAs would give their data to the State and the State could return these LEA-generated data to the LEAs as State-provided measures?

Moreover, the State proposed that student growth would represent a “super 50%.” That is, if the student growth measure contradicted the professional practice measure, the statistical evidence of student performance would swing the evaluative rating in the direction it dictated. This was largely memorialized in decision matrices; practice versus growth, but with the rating value in the cells skewed toward the value coming from student growth. (As an ironic aside, for the spring 2015 ratings, some LEAs are proposing the reverse: professional practice as a super 50%.)

It should surprise no one that teacher and principal bargaining groups’ backs went up, and the debates that unfolded over the next two years, particularly those within the Governor’s Council for Educator Effectiveness, were contentious. However, there were some considerations that mature reflection brought forward, at least to some, and which should not be quickly dismissed.

For starters, K-12 education in the U.S. is a trillion dollar-per-year enterprise. But apart from the slow drip of NAEP, TIMSS, and PISA data, data which provide an unrelentingly bleak assessment of education progress in the U.S., taxpayers continue to fund a status quo education system, periodically perturbed with lurches in approach. Education should be decentralized, allowing site-based decision making and direct school control of budgets. Perhaps better, curriculum should be standardized to support mobile student populations, and purchasing should be centralized to benefit from economies of scale. School systems should be organized with K-12 seamless oversight. Or perhaps by grade level strand. Or perhaps by geographical distribution. Or perhaps by performance level. Did it not make sense, did it not demand an effort to put some objective data under scrutiny in an endeavor to ascertain the actual contribution of some of these critical elements? Were not the leadership of the principal and the instruction of the teacher to be counted as critical elements? Put bluntly, what has the country been buying to the tune of a trillion dollars per year?

A second consideration, equally important and more subtle, was to give teachers control over objective measures that would mitigate the effects of relationships, personalities, and the vagaries of assignment among schools. While it might have been true that strong teachers embraced rigorous evaluation based on evidence of growth, this seemed bitter medicine to their bargaining groups who argued to exclude assessment measures from evaluation models.

A third consideration was the growing awareness that educator evaluation might be mistaken for the outcome. Better student achievement was the outcome, and if all these initiatives did not lead to changes in higher education, schools, principals, and teachers as evidenced by student growth and learning, the work was purposeless.

This was the lay of the land during 2010-2011. The State was overconfident about what it had available. Many stakeholders, especially teacher representative units, were suspicious of the motives of other stakeholders. Moreover, no one had successfully built rosters mapping students to teachers. Confounding all of this was the lagging timeline for outcome measures, a material consideration of the evaluative information. Timely state test assessment scores did not exist and were not going to exist for years to come. Often strong teachers would say they willingly endorsed empirical evaluation plans...but wanted to be evaluated on the work they had just concluded, not on work with students already a year removed.

In fall 2012, the new State Superintendent, Dr. Lillian Lowery, realized that the chaotic fits and starts of TPE could not continue as they had. She charged David Volrath, as a direct report to herself, to build a nimble team to move the work in a radical new direction. Among the major moves which happened very quickly were to:

- Unify the four fragmented RTTT projects under a single TPE banner with control over the linked funds;

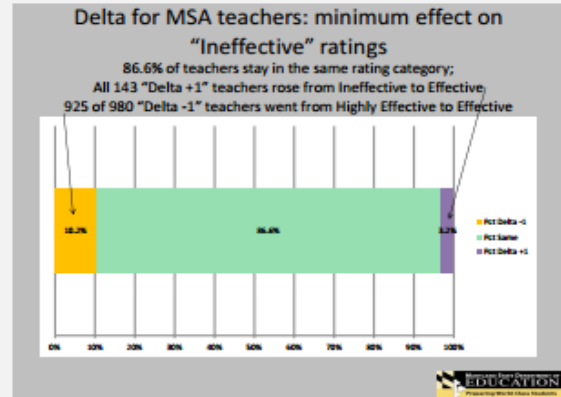
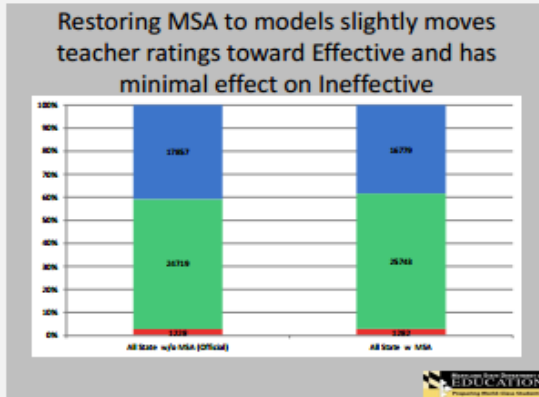
- Abandon the idea of procuring a unitary state evaluative system, and instead invest those funds directly in the LEAs' systems and capacities;
- Collect best practices developed in LEAs and build the State model from these elements;
- Scuttle the series of complex statistical models in favor of a weighted transformation matrix, expressly fitted to the Maryland data and controlled for the year-to-year, subject-to-subject wide swings in the MSA;
- Transform the State TPE Model from a "default" to a simplified and elegant model that could be viewed as an ideal, not as a disaster;
- Use Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) to bridge the transitions in curriculum and assessment while strengthening direct teacher control over multiple quantifiable measures of student attainment;
- Express the theory of action as affirming professional development to enhance the caliber of the cadre of Maryland educators, rejecting the notion that the explicit or implicit goal is cull out the weakest members of the profession;
- Put this model into action by developing a statewide "Principal Pipeline," cohorts of rising talent who would be fully grounded on the leadership standards and outcomes that showed the greatest promise to run effective schools and to nurture effective faculties and communities;
- Encompass institutions of higher education, specifically teacher preparation programs, in the project;
- Study the results of the work, bolstered by local expert judgment, to develop greater consistency across LEAs to ensure rigor in SLOs, reliability in observations, transparency in processes, and comparability in ultimate ratings. Put simply, a strong teacher should be recognized as such regardless of LEA or school; and
- Develop new and better ways to prove the value of the work by treating student achievement as the mission-critical outcome.

Unfortunately the political center did not hold. In January 2013, the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) directed Maryland to use the High School Assessments "as a data point within an SLO" for any teacher responsible for instruction in an HSA covered course. But in September 2013, under pressure from right and left assailing Common Core Standards and the associated consortium tests (PARCC and Smarter Balanced), the USDE Secretary proffered language allowing states to eliminate assessment scores from official teacher and principal evaluation ratings. Maryland had successfully fit a psychometric model for using the MSA which made sense, was fair, captured the right things to value. LEAs had gotten religion, as it were, and more and more were using the State approach or something very similar. LEA administrators were reporting that ratings with State assessments were more accurate. The strong sense was that the data would break in favor of the teachers.

The next months were a time with scant external clarity. Offers were on the table and then off. There were extensions, waivers, and renewals. Once again, TPE became entangled in the requirements of ESEA. Left alone, Maryland was positioned to pull off something which a few years earlier had seemed impossible: a fair and objective balanced evaluation system.

One demand salvaged much State effort: when running the consequential evaluation data for spring 2014, LEAs had to also run the model preserving the 20 percent State assessment measure. This version USDE described as the "qualifying" model, the model that had secured the RTTT grant. Although a headache for the LEA data leads, this did give MSDE a year to probe the effects of incorporating test scores. The theoretic sense had been correct: including test scores more often helped teachers than harmed them. The following graphic captured it in a nutshell. An extract from [TPE Communication Bulletin #29](#) (highlighted on the following page) is worth revisiting. Wherever teacher ratings rose, they rose from ineffective to effective. For those who lost a level, these were scores that fell from highly effective to effective. That is, the data centered better, and teachers benefitted most when they needed to.

MSA Impact



The role played by the State Assessment has been one of the most debated aspects of TPE since the passage of the Education Reform Act of 2010 and the winning of the RTTT Grant. The two figures above show this controversy has not played out as many argued it might. For context, the original MSDE parameter required that the Maryland School Assessments (MSAs), where they existed, needed to represent 20 percentage points of the total evaluation. Under the flexibility provided by USDE in fall 2013, Maryland was allowed to set aside the MSA, although the equal split between Practice and Growth had to remain intact. All LEAs ran their approved models WITH and WITHOUT the MSA. The version without yielded the "official" rating of record.

First, it should be noted that restoring the MSA at 20% value had almost no effect on the overall distribution of teacher ratings. The effect, such as it is, is to better center the data within the Effective rating range. Statewide, only 54 additional teachers were rated as Ineffective out of a population of nearly 44 thousand teachers (0.1%). However, when these data are examined, not in the aggregate but as an actual effect on individuals, the results are more interesting. To visualize this relationship a "delta" variable was created. A positive delta value indicated a rise in performance rating and vice versa. A delta value of zero meant the rating was unchanged with or without addition of the MSA. Nearly 87% of all MSA teachers were unchanged, but of the 143 teachers who earned a +1 delta, every case represented a rise from Ineffective to Effective. For these teachers, the MSA always boosted their rating. Of the 980 teachers who earned a -1 delta, 925 or 94.4% of them fell from Highly Effective to Effective, demonstrating the centering effect mentioned above.

Implications for LEAs: LEAs need to carve out these staff and examine these records closely. Did the MSA introduce objectivity and reduce subjectivity in the assignment of ratings? Particularly, for those teachers who were raised from ineffective, were concerns revealed in the consistency and robustness with which the Professional Practice half of the evaluation model was applied?

What next, where next?

Five years and a quarter billion RTTT dollars later, some things look unchanged. If there has been a sustained transformation anywhere, it might be in those areas that were under the influence of TPE. Across the four projects that commingled to form TPE, the preponderance of the money was directly invested into LEAs. Some LEAs paid for professional development—valuable but ephemeral. LEAs put the money into technology initiatives. In many LEAs, especially the smaller and medium sized systems, bandwidth is broader, there are more devices for staff and students, capacity for online assessment is enhanced, and strategies to capture measures of instructional effectiveness are streamlined and sometimes fully automated.

SLOs have become the coin of the realm: every LEA is using them, although LEA results run from sophisticated to coarse measures. Beginning in 2013, in partnership with MACC@WestEd and CTAC, LEAs and stakeholders have been asked to assess the maturation of the SLO work. From survey to survey, from focus group to focus group, the positive trend of the data has been dramatic. Teachers and principals indicate with increasing certainty that they have a common knowledge, a network of support, technical strategies to facilitate efforts, and a deeper grasp of consistency and rigor. As icing on the cake, Maryland enjoys an enviable Memorandum of Understanding with critical stakeholders, including the teacher bargaining units, to further the SLO work together toward a consensus outcome: better teaching demonstrated by better learning.

Because the LEAs became the primary source and the testing ground for the elements in the State TPE model, TPE has enjoyed unusual trust and collaboration. Unfortunately, at the cusp of such success and such progress, a critical piece of the work remains uncertain, unclosed, and undefined: if and when and how to revisit state assessment scores.

The guidance from Washington is muddy. There is a new willingness to “unfasten” teacher evaluation from any kind of standardized assessment score...or at least to push this decision onto the states. An interest in accountability persists, but not in the sense of a “[national schoolboard](#)” creating consistency and rigor.

Looking back to 2010, the sense then was that schools, particularly struggling schools, could be fixed if weak teachers and leaders were purged. Certain states embraced heavy-handed accountability systems touted for their ability to cull out the worst, backed up with policy to enforce personnel actions. Maryland avoided those pitfalls, but problems persist. Schools are often driven by relationships, and effectiveness may be measured using highly subjective yardsticks. There is no statewide consensus that principals and their executive officers are consistent connoisseurs of good teaching and instructional leadership. There is broad recognition that greater inter-rater reliability is an important place to arrive at, but how to get these does not have a clear or easy path. If the principal is consistent, capable, and conscientious, all parts of the evaluation, from SLO to observation, will impart rigor and value. If the principal is cavalier, superficial, and treats TPE as a check-box exercise, all parts of the evaluation will be of shallow value.

Moreover, the prima facie argument to teachers remains a tough sell: that incorporating assessment scores—especially new, unknown, and surely more difficult assessment scores—will be to their benefit by giving them something completely objective over which they have direct control through their instruction.

When school year 2016-17 arrives, Maryland will have repeated measures in PARCC. PARCC promises to return performance levels, the two highest representing national standards that are endorsed and valued. PARCC may include its own growth score. PARCC may include national student percentile scores, an approach that is broadly perceived as fair because student demographics are virtually eliminated, students being compared like to like based on prior ability and no other criterion. PARCC may allow a further simplified M-TAI, not a 9 x 9 value matrix, but a 6 x 6 matrix.

However, it is far from certain that LEAs will want a consistent State approach when it is time to revisit test scores. If the principal continues to own schoolwide performance data, which USDE will certainly require incorporate assessment data in some form, the principal will impose student scores on teachers one way or another. Absent parameters, principal may employ an à la carte approach to using test scores for teacher evaluation. The issue, emerging already in 2010-2011, of the great subjectivity in educator evaluation will not necessarily be mitigated by stepping back from a fair and transparent model like M-TAI which showed such promise in spring 2013 and 2014.

TPE asked some basic questions up front: Can the State build a fair student growth model? Yes. Can the LEAs map unique students to teachers? Yes. Can LEAs produce high quality evaluation models that honor the requirements of the law to incorporate significant multiple measures of evidence? Yes. Can these models actually be executed and analysis-quality data generated? Yes.

Other questions, however, do not produce a string of “yes” answers. Will the political will to stay the course persist? Will USDE, the Congress, the State, and LEAs continue to devote the funds to continue the work which is incipient at best? Will there be an appetite for more demanding standards better reflecting NAEP, PISA, and TIMMS tied to tougher assessments? Will the nation blink anticipating the certain bad news such more rigorous requirements will reveal as measured by assessments that have already sustained one serious reiteration to their delivery model?

The answer to all of the above questions is “maybe.” If we continue the climb, we may regain our footing in the international education competitive arena. If we take the low road, it is only a matter of time before other societies set the standards and call the shots. If that happens, accountability will be on the table again and perhaps with more of the intention that was so evident before RTTT.

Benjamin Feldman

For the past three years Dr. Feldman has served as a Subject Matter Expert on matters of evaluation model design and performance.

Reflection on Professional Development

One of the goals of Maryland's Race To The Top (RTTT) reform effort for Great Teachers and Leaders was to provide professional development to support executive officers so that they could evaluate their principals and support, coach, and provide guidance to principals as they evaluated teachers. The project has been implemented with high quality. The members of the TPE team charged with professional development responsibilities did that by first building the knowledge of the executive officers. During the pilot years of the TPE project, the focus of the professional development opportunities provided by MSDE was geared to those items new to TPE, such as Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), components of the frameworks, and calculating ratings. These were delivered as isolated topics. Although the feedback and survey data were very positive, we recognized the need to change the focus of our professional development efforts to put these disparate pieces together into a comprehensive TPE cycle. As a result, a series of five executive officer summits was designed for a specific audience with specific goals in mind. Historically, principals and teachers have always had evaluations: executive officers evaluate principals; principals evaluate teachers. Much of those processes remain the same. The purpose of the executive officer summits was to synthesize all the new elements of TPE with the parts that remain unchanged, into a comprehensive model. By targeting these sessions to the specific needs of principal supervisors, we were able to address important aspects of the TPE cycle and help establish processes and structures to assist executive officers as they completed the new TPE process. Each session was designed through the lens of an executive officer, putting all the components they will be expected to perform together into a coherent process. By providing executive officers opportunities to go through the process and to target the sessions to their specific needs as supervisors, they were able to complete evaluations for their principals, and also support and coach their principals as their principals implemented the process at the school level with teachers. Feedback, again, was extremely positive; however, as the importance of SLOs as a growth measure became apparent, we focused our professional development on the SLO process, which was new to all.

In year four, the focus was on the construction of high quality and rigorous Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) as the glue that tied Maryland's College and Career Ready Standards, TPE, and new assessments together as an instructional tool to increase student achievement. An important byproduct of these sessions was the opportunities it provided for the participants to debrief and learn with colleagues. In this way, ideas were shared, obstacles were mitigated, consistencies between and among school systems developed, and best practices emerged. During this past year, we drilled down to improve and increase the quality as we all learned more and benefited from the initial statewide rollout of the TPE experience. Therefore, the statewide convenings brought Local Education Agency (LEA) teams of executive officers, principals, and teachers together to help establish consistent language and expectations between and across LEAs, and simultaneously focus on building the capacity of promising principals for succession planning. Since the goal of TPE is to improve the effectiveness of every educator to impact student achievement, we believe that each year our collective skills have been refined and our effectiveness has increased throughout Maryland. This high quality implementation is also evident in the historic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by all major stakeholders: Teacher organizations, principal organizations, local boards of education, superintendents' organization, and the State Board of Education.

Throughout the RTTT years, the increases in the collaboration between and among LEAs indicated the importance and high regard with which the professional development opportunities were viewed and were contributing to the success of TPE. The members of the TPE team queried the LEAs on their needs and designed Summits and LEA sessions to meet their requests and needs. Additionally, the work on SLOs became a large focus of the training. As such, we entered into a partnership with national experts on SLOs to continue to train executive officers throughout Maryland. In September, all 24 LEAs sent teams of seven to participate with training provided by national experts. This was followed in early October with a repeat session for 60 additional executive officers. All feedback has indicated that participants have found all information timely, extremely relevant, and valuable to their work. The continuing growth in participation, including teams from the two non-RTTT LEAs, indicates the significant success this project has had on meeting its initial goals.

Additionally, the second convening was held on December 9 and 10, 2014. All LEAs sent teams of eight, including a communications team member, to participate. A statewide feedback survey was sent to all teachers, principals, and assistant principals through the assistance of the MOU participating organizations immediately after the December convening to determine if the information being presenting is finding its way to classroom teachers and building administrators. Although improvement had been noted, this still remains

an area to address. A follow-up meeting for executive officers was held in January 2015 as a continuation of the professional development on designing quality SLOs. Executive officers were introduced to the newly designed rubric for designing a quality principal SLO. In February, the Principals Advisory Council was introduced to the rubric for principal SLOs. In both instances, participants were presented with both theory and practice in designing a quality principal SLO. Each of the professional development sessions was structured so as to provide models for executive officers to use with their principals and for principals to use with their teachers. Finally, in March LEA teams reconvened to examine the data both statewide and individually by school system and to begin the discussion of adjustments and actions needed prior to the start of the 2015-16 school year.

Upon reflection, we believe that the effective, data-informed professional development provided to executive officers and teachers throughout the project years has been relevant, ongoing, and job embedded. Executive officers had opportunities to build their capacity to complete the evaluation processes for their principals, engage principals to create quality SLOs, assist principals to assess these SLOs, and use the data gleaned to determine individual principal development needs. By utilizing a case study approach, executive officers selected two principals to “follow” throughout the five summits. These principals remained anonymous. Their selection gave the executive officer an opportunity to simulate an authentic process in an authentic way. By concentrating primarily on their “chosen” principals, whether it was to analyze school data, develop goals, hold an initial/mid-year/final conference, hold purposeful school visits, collect data, or develop and monitor an SLO, the executive officer went through all aspects of the TPE process, taking the content and processes discussed at each session and applying it to actual principals. This made each activity and goal post in the TPE process real and practical for them and provided chances for executive officers to dialogue with each other, within and across LEAs. An important byproduct of these sessions was the opportunities it provided for the participants to debrief and learn with colleagues. In this way, ideas were shared, obstacles were mitigated, consistencies between and among school systems developed, and best practices emerged. Finally, based on the professional development training for executive officers to complete principal evaluations, the executive officers can then provide the coaching and support to each of their principals as they implement the new evaluation system effectively with their teachers. The TPE professional development team designed Summit activities with the end in mind of “training the trainers,” in this case the executive officers. By modeling the processes and approaches to using best professional practices to influence and promote student growth, we provided executive officers with models for use with their principals, and in turn, for their principals to use with their teachers.

One highlight of PY5 was that MSDE created an office devoted to teacher/principal evaluation (OTPE) with the goal of ensuring sustainability and continuity across Maryland in the critical pre-K to 16 context. Two permanent positions were added to this new office to address succession planning and to provide institutes of higher education (IHE) with professional development services on TPE. The signing of the MOU by all major stakeholders set the stage for a statewide professional development approach and service model focused on improving the quality of SLOs in order to positively impact teacher professional practice and student growth. These Maryland stakeholders recognized the importance of utilizing SLOs as a means to improve educator effectiveness. The Professional Development (PD) trainings were designed, materials produced, and oftentimes delivered through an ongoing partnership with the CTAC organization, national experts on SLOs. As a result, there was a significant increase in participation by all stakeholders in PD training sessions throughout the year.

All LEAs brought eight-person teams to three statewide convenings to work collaboratively on SLOs and TPE and to learn together. Additionally, similar training was presented to IHE approved preparation program teams for pre-service teachers, alternative preparation programs, and principal preparation programs. PD was provided to the Promising Principals cohort of 48 (two per LEA) in order to build the capacity in TPE for those identified future principals prior to entering the principalship. Also, executive officers and principals continued to receive training. The recognition of the need for MSDE staff to have the same training that LEAs engaged in this year resulted in opportunities for new MSDE staff to avail themselves of similar SLO training.

Finally, the planned summer CCR conferences offered opportunities to train large numbers of teachers, principals, and central office personnel on the components of quality SLOs. By OTPE’s training of master teachers, who then delivered the content on designing quality SLOs at the conferences, the LEAs have received the benefit of having another group of educators who can help build SLO quality and competency at the local level. The work this year brought a more comprehensive approach to building capacity for Maryland

educators on SLOs and TPE through professional development that focused on consistency of message, vocabulary, and standards that was shared throughout our entire state. All stakeholders benefited from this approach: executive officers, principals, teachers, aspiring, and promising leaders.

During the upcoming school year, the delivery model for professional development will become more specific in terms of content and intent. Based on the feedback we have received, there will be a combination of statewide, regional, and group specific meeting. The development of appropriate and rigorous SLOs will continue to serve as the focus for the delivery of best practices in professional development and collegial and supervisory conversations as a means of promoting student growth. Stakeholders such as teachers, executive officers, principals, and professional development specialists will take part in focused convenings that will serve as the basis for a continuation of the conversations, protocols, and collegial collaboration that has marked OTPE's approach to consistency within LEAs and across the State in the furtherance of high expectations and achievement. Working together with our stakeholder groups, we will craft a year rich with professional development offerings that will continue our statewide model for continuous improvement for all educators.

Ilene Swirnow, Joe Freed & Frank Stetson

For the past three years, Ms. Swirnow has served as the Director of Leadership Development on this project

For the past three years, Mr. Freed has served as a Subject matter Expert on Teacher and Principal Evaluation.

For the past three years, Dr. Stetson has served as a Subject matter Expert on Teacher and Principal Evaluation

Reflection on Principal Development

One of the goals of Maryland's RTTT reform effort for Great Teachers and Leaders was to provide professional development to support Maryland's 24 LEAs to build succession capacity for school-based administrators. This was done through the development of the Promising Principals Academy. The project has been implemented with high quality, and built upon the success of the former Aspiring Principals Institute. In 2008, prior to RTTT funding, at the request of the nine Eastern Shore LEAs, MSDE piloted an Aspiring Principals Institute to help build capacity of leaders from across the shore. The design and purpose of the institute was to assist these LEAs in building instructional leadership capacity. The design of the institute allowed for the participants to become immersed in the Maryland Instructional Leadership Framework which was used as a roadmap for their professional growth. This year-long institute focused on school culture, training on purposeful observation of instruction to increase student achievement, and training on data-driven decision making. In 2010, the Aspiring Principals Institute was expanded to include the four western most districts in the State.

In 2012, with funding from RTTT, the Institute was expanded to include participants from all 24 LEAs across the state. The Institute was held at 4 regional locations around the state. In total 715 assistant principals and school based leaders have participated in the Institutes.

In year four, the focus shifted to a more comprehensive program that provided a deeper dive into specific concepts and skill that are needed for a principal to become "school ready." This year-long Promising Principals Academy involved 48 participants who were personally nominated by each of the 24 LEA superintendents across the state of Maryland. Their nominations were based on the needs of each district to "strengthen the bench" for prepared principal candidates.

The content for the Academy was guided by feedback from the LEA superintendents. They provided input that reflected the perceived weaknesses and vulnerabilities of entry-level principals around the ISLLC standards. This input contributed to the collective prioritization and design of Academy activities. Additionally, individual participant needs were considered for work between Academy sessions.

At regional orientation sessions, candidates participated in a group decision-making prompt designed to give them an experience in working with others in reaching compromise. Candidates completed a temperament exercise which helped identify individual preferences when working in teams. The results of this exercise, in addition to gender, district, and ethnicity were factors as we created cohort teams for the year-long Academy. This cross pollination of individuals from across the state developed a professional network for the promising principals that have extended beyond the Academy experience.

Eight teams of six candidates were created. Each team was assigned a coach. The coaches were all former highly successful principals. The coaches worked with their teams over the course of the year during the Academy convenings, as well as team and individual coaching sessions between convenings. The teams were purposely developed to group participants from different types of districts, (urban, suburban, and rural). This provided a challenge geographically for the coaches to meet with them between convenings. iPads were purchased for all participants and coaches along with a program (Fuze) that allowed for virtual and video conferencing between the coach and promising principals. The NASSP publication ***10 Skills for Successful School Leaders*** was used as a framework for the content shared by coaches between convenings.

Content for the Academy convenings was rich and deep. At the summer session, Dave Wheelock from Synergistics worked the participants through a team building survival activity that created multiple opportunities for the teams to get familiar with one another. Dr. Steven Gross, Professor of Educational Leadership at the College of Education, Temple University worked with the Academy on the topic of Ethical Educational Leadership in Turbulent Times (the title of his book). The participants delved into resolving moral dilemmas through the four lenses of Ethic of Care, Ethic of the Profession, Ethic of Justice, and the Ethic of Critique. The promising principals also spent time defining and refining their core beliefs in order to begin to craft their vision for their school and the resulting mission for their school community. The state school superintendent Dr. Lowery brought greetings and congratulations to this inaugural cohort of Promising Principals and answered many questions from the group.

The fall convening's focus was Increasing Student Achievement and Advancing Leadership Practice by learning about, and applying a quality rating rubric for teacher Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). The day's session began with a discussion of the role of evaluation in elevating teacher and student performance.

The bulk of the day was spent under the direction of Dr. Bill Slotnik of the Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC) in Boston. The promising principals spent the day totally engaged in unpacking the components of an effective SLO, as well as learning how to apply a teacher SLO rubric when working with teachers to improve their instructional practice. Their exposure to this content was invaluable as local LEAs have rolled out this information for use in the teacher evaluation process. The promising principals reviewed and scored SLOs that were sent in from around the state. They were then given annotated versions of the same SLO from CTAC and discussed how the "experts" scored them. This exercise and experience put the vast majority of the promising principals way ahead of where their own principals are, relative to this still evolving way at looking at student growth.

Communication was the topic at the winter convening. The sessions went from a macro systemic perspective to the micro school level situations that the soon to be principals are likely to encounter. After learning about communication and ensuring that their constituency has received the message as well as the steps they should take to monitor compliance with the message, the promising principals then participated in an activity that forced them to think on their feet. Each team member was given a scenario of an event that happened at their school. They had one minute to digest the information and then 2 of their cohort fired pre-determined questions at them as though they were the principal talking to reporters. The "interview" was recorded on the interviewee's iPad. Each participant had this experience and when finished, the team debriefed each interview and gave feedback.

The cohort received a valuable media training presentation from Dr. Tim Tooten, the education reporter from WBAL TV in Baltimore, MD. He shared a great presentation on the do's and don'ts of interacting with television and radio reporters. He shared numerous tips and suggestions of ways to answer question so that reporters are satisfied with what they are given and the principal stays out of hot water with the central office. Dr. Tooten also took the time to critique many of the interviews which the promising principals had recorded the day before, offering insightful feedback to the group.

Corey Mitchell, Staff Writer for ***Education Week*** attended the winter convening and has published a story about Maryland's Promising Principals Academy. The link is:
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/01/21/maryland-grooms-assistant-principals-to-take-schools.html>

During the spring convening, the promising principals participated in a reflection session along with teams from the state LEAs to take stock in where they were (as a district) five years after RTTT implementation and where are they headed. Topics around this included a review of teacher ratings at a district level, and

significant contributors to the evaluation model. This district wide review of the data around teacher performance opened the eyes of the promising principals. They began to recognize the frequent disconnect between highly effective teacher ratings and a lack of corresponding student achievement. This district discussion was the perfect segue to a school based discussion they would need to be prepared for as principals.

The final session for the inaugural Promising Principals Academy was informative and reflective. Sessions were conducted around school law and the ever changing ruling of which principals must be aware and prepared for. Additionally, the coaches had front loaded information and content around the budget process during their virtual meetings with their teams. The teams were paired to go through that valuable information through a series of coach-designed activities.

Promising principals were given time to deeply reflect on the year-long Academy and its components of convenings, networking, and virtual team, and individual coaching sessions. This comprehensive feedback provided the MSDE team with valuable information around what worked and what we can improve upon. The team is currently hard at work planning for the next cohort and incorporating suggestions and recommendations made by this group. An overwhelming number of participants said they wanted to be included in future Academies, and as a result we are conducting a panel discussion of Academy alumni at our summer convening this year.

The content for the Academy was rich and deep. Based on the survey of the superintendents, the participants are far better prepared for the pitfalls that might have plagued them as they begin their tenure as principals. Perhaps more important than the content however, is the professional networking and bonding that occurred between the promising principals from all around the state. Professional and personal relationships were formed clearly evident as we progressed through the year. The feedback we received from the cohort strongly singled out those relationships as an enduring resource as their careers continued. The geographic boundaries were erased and bonds were formed across the state. This did not happen accidentally. The purposeful planning of interactive and social activities encouraged, promoted and ever so gently forced these interpersonal interactions.

As the second cohort of Promising Principals begins their year-long leadership-development experience, we are well situated to build on the great success of our first Academy.

Tom DeHart

For the past year Mr. DeHart has led the Promising Principals Academy and for four years prior worked with Race To the Top and the Breakthrough Center.

Reflections on Higher Education

During the 2014-2015 academic year, teacher and principal preparation programs engaged in professional development regarding how to integrate the elements of teacher and principal evaluation (TPE) in Maryland preparation programs. An advisory committee of higher education representatives provided guidance for meeting content. During this year, representatives from 96% of higher education initial certification programs, 100 % of Maryland Approved Alternative Preparation Programs, and 94% of principal preparation programs attended a TPE convening specifically designed for higher education.

At the national level, we often are asked, “How is Maryland able to enlist strong support from educator preparation programs”? Key words, **‘alignment’** and **‘impact on student learning’**, clearly influence the overwhelming support from Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs). Program representatives are working in teams to align assessments, syllabi, as well as clinical and field experiences, to ensure candidates are prepared to fully engage in the evaluation process.

The following insights reflect perspectives from Maryland’s Educator Preparation Providers:

Dr. Ronald Thomas, Center for Leadership in Education, Towson University

“Based on many years of SLO practice and research around the country, the Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC) concluded in a recent report that the process of thinking through the inter-related components of the SLO is what matters most.

“This is exactly what data coach Dr. Ron Thomas of Towson University’s Center for Leadership in Education observed at Oakland Mills Middle School in Howard County as he worked with the school in rolling out their first-year SLOs. For Professor Thomas and school Principal Kathy Orlando, the thinking in SLO development process was the most important part of the process. They concluded that engagement of all teachers, including teacher candidates, from start to finish is the key factor that will make SLOs a major game changer in developing a data-driven culture among all teachers.”

Dr. Daniel Cunningham Jr., Coordinator and lecturer of the Educational Leadership Program, McDaniel College

“The SLO process brings a degree of quantification to the teacher observation/evaluation process. School administrators for years have struggled to move the observation/evaluation process from one of compliance to actually using it as a vehicle to improve classroom instruction. When utilized effectively, the SLO process opens the door to instructional leadership and leadership of the student’s learning.

“As students prepare for careers in educational leadership, it is vital that they be made aware of and familiarized with these changes in expectations for effectively functioning future leaders. Within our educational leadership program, we continuously emphasize the utilization of the value of the SLO process from simply being another exercise of compliance to one of genuine value to the classroom that can impact student learning.”

Dr. Robert P. Pelton, Professor, School of Education, Stevenson University

“In the State of Maryland, Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) play a vital role in the State Teacher and Principal Evaluation model. The SLO process also builds capacity for reflective and responsive teaching. It is imperative for teacher preparation programs to take a leading role in preparing their teacher candidates in the skills to successfully implement Student Learning Objectives.

“Interns in the teacher preparation program at Stevenson University develop and practice the skill-sets involved in planning and executing SLOs through the creation and implementation of a student impact study, also known as action research. Interns work closely with their school and university mentors to develop a study that is aligned with their mentor teachers’ own SLOs. This helps interns experience and internalize the SLO elements and practices within an authentic teaching learning environment. The ultimate outcome of including SLO skills in the teacher preparation process is professional learning for teacher candidates and student achievement for our K-12 pupils.”

Dr. Karen Robertson, Associate Dean, College of Education, Towson University

“As we discuss SLOs with interns, they see an immediate connection to the edTPA (Educational Teacher Performance Assessment) or the Evidence of Student Learning Project, which are completed in their full-time internship. The assessments capture a candidate’s ability to impact student learning. Assessing prior understanding, designing differentiated lessons, assessing learning, and planning next steps are part of both critical components of the SLO and/or edTPA and the Evidence of Student Learning Project. Understanding one process makes understanding the other very easy.”

The accreditation process for Maryland’s preparation programs is supported by a continuous improvement model. Preparation programs will be strengthened by purposefully integrating the components of Maryland’s evaluation process to examine program data on the effectiveness of new teachers and principals to impact student learning and school improvement. By engaging in the components of the evaluation process, beginning teachers and principals will understand the knowledge and skills necessary to align content, assessment, growth targets and instructional strategies.

Liz Neal

For the past year, Ms. Neal has led the work with our IHEs, prior to that serving in the Office of Educator Effectiveness.